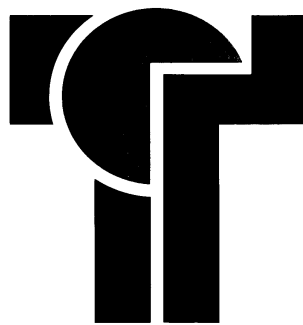


City of Tempe

**Mayor's Youth Advisory
Commission**

Youth Town Hall Report

2014



Dear Mayor and City Council:

This has been another productive year for the Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission (MYAC). The activities organized by MYAC have allowed Tempe's youth to contribute their ideas and assist in the continued development of our city. We would like to thank you for your on-going support of our Commission and its projects.

The events sponsored by MYAC this year were very successful. We developed and provided the "Be Fit, Don't Sit Healthy Habits" project which promoted the importance being fit and healthy eating to elementary school aged children. The project was very well received by Kid Zone students and we hope to continue similar community service projects in the future.

Our annual Town Hall allowed youth and community leaders to exchange ideas on issues concerning youth. A summary of the dialogue that occurred and recommendations made at Youth Town Hall are detailed in this report. These recommendations are the original ideas of Tempe's youth to solve problems our community faces.

On behalf of the Commission I would like to thank you again for your dedication and commitment to the youth of Tempe. The successes we have had could not have been achieved without your support.

Sincerely,

**Mohammad Halloum, Chair
Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission**

**Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission
2013/2014 Officers**

Rohit Badia
Chair

Tiffanie Cappello Lee
Vice Chair

Nyesha Barnes
Administrative Recorder

Timur Karamanov
Treasurer

Mohammad Halloum
Youth Town Hall Chair

Chris Moffitt
Community Service Project Chair

**Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission
2013/2014 Members**

**Alexis Blanc
Dominic Bonelli
Jason George
Smita Gopalakrishnan
Zaria Guignard
Andrea Lara-Garcia
Zach Mitchell
Aemelia Morris
Andie Niebling
Maria Ornelas
John Osgood
Julia Rasmussen
J.D. Scribner
Carson Streiff
Franklin Zyriek**

Tempe City Council

**Mayor
Mark Mitchell**

**Vice Mayor
Onnie Shekerjian**

**Council Members
Robin Arredondo-Savage**

Shana Ellis

Kolby Granville

Joel Navarro

Corey Woods

Tempe Youth Town Hall
Report

Presented by

Mohammad Halloum
Youth Town Hall Chair

The Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission sponsors Tempe's Youth Town Hall each year to bring together teens and adults from the community to discuss issues of concern to Tempe's youth and offer recommendations for practical solutions to these issues.

This was Tempe's thirty-fourth year to sponsor Youth Town Hall, which was held Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at the Westside Community Center. To ensure input from all sectors of our community, representatives from high schools, middle schools, service clubs, youth organizations, community centers, local businesses, the police department, and juvenile court were invited to participate.

Participants were divided into six discussion groups covering three topic areas. Two groups discussed **"Teen LGBTQ Discrimination"** and two other groups discussed **"Teen Health and Wellness."** The remaining two groups addressed **"Teen Stress and Depression."**

After enjoying welcoming comments by Councilmember Robin Arredondo-Savage participants met in their issue groups. They began discussion of their assigned topic by defining the problem and possible contributing factors. Groups then made recommendations for solutions and focused on those that were practical and could be easily implemented. Youth spokespersons from each of the discussion groups presented their committee's recommendations to all Town Hall participants in the closing general session. These presentations gave those in attendance the opportunity to gain understanding and insight from each other.

The Youth Town Hall Report is available to various agencies, organizations, schools and service clubs to review and use as a planning tool in our community. We hope that Youth Town Hall will continue to be a success and a model on how to effectively get input directly from youth on issues that impact them.

CITY OF TEMPE YOUTH TOWN HALL AGENDA

Tuesday, February 19, 2014
Westside Community Center
715 West Fifth Street

- 8:10 - 8:30** **Registration** Front of Westside Community Center
Continental Breakfast provided
- 8:30 - 8:50** **Opening Session** Westside Community Center Gymnasium
- Welcome - Rohit Badia, MYAC Chairperson
- Comments - Councilmember Robin Arredondo-Savage, City of Tempe
- Instructions - Mohammad Halloum, Youth Town Hall Chairperson
- 9:00 - 11:40** **Committee Sessions** - Breaks will occur at the discretion of each committee.
- Committee A - "Teen LGBTQ Discrimination - 1"**
Westside Community Center – Sunset Room
- Committee B - "Teen LGBTQ Discrimination - 2"**
Westside Community Center – Riverside Room
- Committee C - "Teen Health & Wellness- 1"**
Westside Community Center – Los Vecinos
- Committee D - "Teen Health & Wellness- 2"**
Westside Community Center – Teen Room
- Committee E - "Teen Stress & Depression -1"**
Westside Community Center – Lindon Park Room
- Committee F - "Teen Stress & Depression - 2"**
Westside Community Center – Art Room
- 11:40 - 12:30** **Lunch** – Provided to all participants at the Westside Community Center
Catered by Dilly's Deli
- 12:35 - 1:40** **Committee Sessions Resume - Discussion Wrap-Up**
- 1:45 - 2:05** **Closing Session** – Westside Community Center Gymnasium
- Committee Summaries**
Each committee representative will give a 3 to 5 minute summary.
- Closing Remarks – Mohammad Halloum, Youth Town Hall Chairperson**

Teen LGBTQ Discrimination – 1

Discussion Group Summary:

Our group focused on bringing a greater awareness to the issue of teen LGBTQ discrimination. Participants discussed how LGBTQ youth experience discrimination, which often takes the form of jokes and bullying and its consequences, which include personal and emotional pain, suicidal ideation, drug and alcohol abuse and social alienation. Our group felt that LGBTQ youth may feel they do not have the same “freedoms” at school in terms of social norms and interactions and that may lead to school drop-out. Youth participants were in consensus that their generation is more open to LGBTQ issues. However, they felt it was important that their parents and other significant adults to be educated on LGBTQ issues, be supportive of youth, and lead change to address discrimination.

Recommendations:

1. Sponsor a teen Gay/Straight Alliance conference.

The Gay/Straight Alliance organizations of each high school in the Tempe Union High School District could partner with the City of Tempe’s Gay/Straight Alliance and its Diversity Office, and with community organizations to hold a district-wide conference focusing on education and resources. This conference could result in increased visibility, support, and awareness of LGBTQ youth and promote anti-discrimination.

2. Offer parent education.

The Tempe Union High School District or a community organization could offer a workshop on LGBTQ youth and the issues they face through a format such as “No Parent Left Behind University.” Providing information that combats myths and stereotypes about LGBTQ youth could assist adults in being more aware of the issues these youth face and to be more open to the negative consequences of discrimination/rejection.

3. Create public service announcements.

High school journalism/media clubs could create public service announcements revolving around teen LGBTQ discrimination that would air during announcement times in schools. The City of Tempe Community Relations department could create similar videos that could air on Channel 11 or they could air the high school generated PSA’s. The content could be similar to the “It Gets Better” Project (www.itgetsbetter.org) with videos and messages by local leaders.

Teen L.G.B.T.Q. Discrimination - 1

**Facilitators: Rebecca Bond
Franklin Zyriek**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

William Ballantine
Ericka Candia
Amaya Castillo
Steven Garcia
Carmela Guaglianone
Markayla Jarzab Hunter
Mary Morton
Rushini Randeniya
Sadie Scheufler
Sebastian Watkins
Hannah Watts
Madeline Zavala Soto

Tempe High School
Connolly Middle School
Laird School
McClintock High School
McClintock High School
Compadre Academy
Tempe High School
Fees College Preparatory Middle School
Corona del Sol High School
Tempe High School
Corona del Sol High School
Tempe High School

Adult Participants

Stephanie Armstrong
Chris Busch
Chuck Cahoy
Michelle Helm
Amanda Nosbisch
Rochelle Wells

Compadre Academy
TESD Superintendent
Tempe City Attorney’s Office
TUHSD Governing Board
Kyrene School District
TESD Governing Board

Teen LGBTQ Discrimination-2

Discussion Summary:

Our group first explored the types of discrimination often experienced by LGBTQ individuals, the possible reasons this group is targeted, and the negative consequences that can occur. Religious taboos, society's long condemnation of gay relationships, lack of knowledge and understanding, fear, shame and rejection from family and friends were identified as contributing to the discrimination and bullying of LGBTQ individuals. Our group then identified the types of bullying that occurs. Overt bullying includes open intimidation, name calling, shaming, and physical/verbal abuse; covert bullying may occur through cyber-attacks, being shunned by others, and made subjects of ridicule. Friends of LGBTQ youth often experience fear and intimidation just by association. Youth participants shared that bullying often occurs during school in hallways and bathrooms or off campus outside the view of adults. LGBTQ individuals often experience greater isolation, higher stress levels, increased school dropout rates, engagement in high risk behaviors including drug use, unprotected sex and elevated suicide rates.

The group then identified their top concerns. They felt in general there is a lack of information and resources available to parents and teachers. All too often parents and teachers are not aware bullying is occurring. Many parents are also unaware their child is LGBTQ. Very few bullies are given any type of intervention following an incident. Students often feel disassociated from teachers/coaches and believe they too can contribute disparaging remarks creating a hostile culture. This creates a hindrance for students looking for and needing support.

Recommendations:

1. Provide readily accessible information and resources related to teen LGBTQ issues.

The City could partner with the Tempe school districts to provide hard copy and internet information on teen LGBTQ resources and bullying support services. This information should include a comprehensive list of local government, non-profit agencies, and community resources that support teen LGBTQ issues and services. The information should be made available at all Tempe middle and high schools in the form of pamphlets, posters, and possibly a City of Tempe website.

2. Have an information booth at one or more of the many City annual events.

The City of Tempe could staff a booth at existing fairs/events in Tempe that provides LGBTQ information, with an emphasis on teen resources and services. Information about the issues facing LGBTQ persons and available resources would be provided. The

City could invite nonprofit and community groups who provide information on current services for youth to also be at the booth. Local teen LGBTQ and bully programs should be included. Specialists could also be on hand to assist those who feel they are victims or abusers. In addition to providing information and resources, the booth would further demonstrate the City's commitment to stop LGBTQ discrimination and bullying.

3. Implement a tri-district comprehensive anti-bullying program.

The three school districts could adopt a best practice anti-bullying program that includes LGBTQ issues. This curriculum could be provided in all middle and high schools annually. The program should include interventions and services for both victims and bullies that are based on conflict resolution rather than punitive measures. The program should also include outcome measures for annual assessment.

4. Implement a teacher /student support system.

Each middle and high school could identify a volunteer teacher per grade level to act as support and a resource for LGBTQ students. The identified teacher would be trained in LGBTQ issues and must be sensitive to the challenges encountered by the LGBTQ students. This would provide an atmosphere within the school where students would feel supported and safe. This would also help reduce the hostile cultural environment students described exists in their schools.

Teen L.G.B.T.Q. Discrimination - 2

**Facilitators: Mickie Berry
Dominic Bonelli**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Adeline Brooks
Sharon Burr
Nokya Carver
Marisa Fuse
Rebecca Green
Elieana Herrera
Ben Moffat
Kyle Pickard
Sundus Saleban
Jaren Savage
Ana Schugurensky
Andrea Stoica
Haley Strauss
Alberto Valenzuela

Connolly Middle School
Compadre Academy
Tempe High School
Tempe High School
Compadre Academy
McClintock High School
Tempe High School
Tempe Preparatory Academy
Compadre Academy
Tempe High School
Tempe High School
Corona del Sol High School
Fees College Preparatory Middle School
Connolly Middle School & All Stars Peer
Leaders

Adult Participants

Kristin Gwinn
Sandy Lowe
Mark Wertsching

Protecting Arizona’s Family Coalition
TUHSD Governing Board
Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.

Teen Health and Wellness - 1

Discussion Group Summary:

Our group began by discussing different elements of health and wellness and narrowed their discussion to focus on unhealthy habits such as overeating, not eating healthy foods, and lack of physical exercise. The teens in our group felt school fundraisers selling junk food, higher costs for healthier foods, and inadequate time for lunch at school, contribute to unhealthy habits. The group was in consensus that education on healthy eating habits should start at a young age and should begin at home and that schools should continue this message by offering healthier lunches and more opportunities for kids to be active. The group also felt there is the need for stronger support networks between teachers, principals, food service managers and students. School policies, as well as teens' knowledge of health and nutrition, all have significant impacts on teens' opportunities to be healthy.

Recommendations:

1. Provide additional lunch time for middle and high schools

Schools could increase the amount of time middle and high school students have for lunch by about 5 – 10 minutes. The additional time for lunch would allow students to have more time to select and buy healthier food options as well as the necessary time to eat their food. The school day could be extended by the same amount of time to ensure no instruction time is impacted.

2. Provide a variety of competitive and noncompetitive physical activity after-school programs for all students.

With a growing number of school hours devoted to increased instructional time, and physical education programs being scaled back in many schools, the afterschool hours are becoming increasingly crucial to ensuring the healthy development of our youth. Interscholastic, intramural, and club programs could be modified and/or expanded to offer a range of competitive and noncompetitive activities. For example, noncompetitive lifetime physical activities include walking, running, and swimming, hiking and bicycling. Physical education classes should explore the teachings of non-traditional sports such as yoga, cross fit and Pilates.

3. Enhance current health curriculums in middle and high schools

School districts could review their policies regarding health class curriculum and revise it to include education for teens about healthy eating habits and lifestyles. These classes would be in addition to the mandated health classes required. They could be offered as an elective or a mandatory class. The goal of health promotion is to help teens establish an active lifestyle and healthy eating habits early in life and to maintain these behaviors throughout their lives.

4. Provide healthy food options.

While nutrition education is important, broader changes in the availability of and access to healthy foods are needed to ensure that young people have healthy options. School districts can continue to work with food vendors to bring healthier food options to schools. All unhealthy foods/beverages could be replaced in the vending machines with healthier food options. A “Taste of the Month” campaign to introduce a new and healthy food option to kids by passing out free samples of a healthy food then available in the vending machine can assist in this transition.

Teen Health and Wellness - 1

**Facilitators: Tanya Chavez
Rohit Badia**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Hector Bay
Christopher Castro Lupercio
Sapna Daryanani
Esar Johnly Dirinagracia
Faith Marken
Joslyn Murillo
Sanna Naveed
Shawnia Nelson
Erica North
Rachel Paredas
Joey Savage
Jeffrey Snoddy
Janelle Wagner
Rook Wood
Elizabeth Zyriek

Connolly Middle School
Tempe High School
Corona del Sol High School
McClintock High School
Fees College Preparatory Middle School

Corona del Sol High School
Kyrene Middle School
Tempe High School
Compadre Academy
Tempe High School
Tempe Preparatory Academy
Ward Traditional Academy
Connolly Middle School
Marcos de Niza High School

Adult Participants

Larry Baggs
Jeremy Edmonds
Mindy Udall-Schulte
Michael Williams

Tempe Police Department
Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.
Connolly Middle School
Maricopa County Workforce Division
Youth Program

Teen Health and Wellness - 2

Discussion Group Summary:

Our group began by identifying what teen health and wellness is to them. The group came to a consensus that teen health and wellness is not just related to diet and exercise, but also includes a social aspect and the ability to balance the social and mental with the physical. The group agreed that being able to achieve balance between all three is more important than achieving perfection. The group identified some of the issues revolving around teen health and wellness. These include eating disorders, poor self-image, and poor eating habits. The group felt some of the contributors to teens not being healthy include easy and convenient access to junk food, high stress and poor time management, lack of confidence and self-worth, and poor examples provided by adults and peers. The group was in consensus that support systems were very important as teens tend to take social, mental and physical health to extremes. Ultimately, the youth in our group felt being healthy is a personal choice.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a “Health Week” in the schools.

The three districts could establish a “Health Week” in the middle and high schools that emphasizes teen health and wellness. This could include a media campaign with daily announcements promoting healthy eating and exercise, healthy food tastings sponsored by the cafeterias, an assembly, and fun activities that promote healthy habits and activities. The districts could partner with the City, fitness and nutrition organizations, and local businesses to provide activities and resources.

2. Offer school-based workshops that promote teen health and wellness.

Wellness professionals could provide school-based workshops on nutrition, exercise, time management, and emotional well-being. These workshops could be offered as part of the proposed “Health Week,” or in student health class, or for extra-credit.

3. Offer a “Field Day” to promote physical activity.

The school districts, the City, and fitness organizations could partner to offer a school based “Field Day” that allows students to participate in different physical activities. School staff vs. student challenges could be part of this. The purpose would be to have students experience how physical activity can be fun and to gain insight into what physical activities they prefer.

Teen Health and Wellness – 2

**Facilitators: Shauna Warner
Zaria Guignard**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Leisly Argota
Sunday Callaway
TJ L'Heureux
Maria Lugo
Aliya Mateen
Brian McDevitt
Grant Oliver
Hannah Olsen
Rakiesha Primous Booth
Jazzmyn Sells
Kameren Silas
Luis Velazio
Triniti Wolff
Humza Zubair

Fees College Preparatory Middle School
Ward Traditional Academy
Marcos de Niza High School
Connolly Middle School
Compadre Academy
McClintock High School
Corona del Sol High School
McClintock High School
Tempe High School
Tempe High School
Gililand Middle School
Laird School
Kyrene Middle School
McClintock High School

Adult Participants

Joey Brudnock
Laura Cruz
Rick Horvath
Beth Lang

Tempe Police Department
Gililand Middle School
Tempe Elementary School District
Tempe Sister Cities Youth Group

Teen Stress and Depression - 1

Discussion Group Summary:

Our group began by identifying some of the causes of teen stress and depression. Factors leading to teen stress include difficult relationships with family and friends, financial issues, academic pressures, employment and/or lack thereof, separation or divorce of parents, bullying, social media, body changes, isolation, social anxiety, and challenges with goal setting, college applications and high expectations by parents and self. In addition, some teens have trouble sharing what is happening in their lives or asking for help due to shame, embarrassment, or feeling all alone. Group members emphasized that individuals cope with stress differently, so what is significant to one person might not have the same impact on another. The group also recognized that stressors can accumulate and something that appears relatively minor can push someone beyond their ability to cope. The group felt depression can be the result of too many stressors in one's life.

Our group then focused on ways to reduce stress and depression. Group members felt healthy habits and self-care is effective for managing common stressors. However, when someone is experiencing acute stress or a number of stressors at the same time prompt intervention and access to a variety of resources is needed. Group members emphasized the importance of providing a range of resources and support systems and ensuring teens are aware of them and encouraged to participate.

Recommendations:

1. Host a "Personal Challenge Day" for middle and high school students.

The schools in partnership with the City and community agencies could develop and host a day-long event consisting of activities that address common stressors. An assembly with guest speakers and experiential activities could be included. These activities should be designed to encourage students and their teachers to stretch beyond their comfort zones and to build trust and rapport between each other. Information on school and community resources should also be provided.

2. Provide a series of teen stress management workshops.

The City, school districts, and community agencies could partner to provide a series of workshops for teens on how to effectively manage stress. This series could expand upon Tempe Union High School District's No Parent Left Behind University's current workshops. Educators, counselors, wellness professionals, and peer mentors could be utilized to provide workshops on healthy relationships, time management, college applications, financial planning, and utilizing diet and exercise to manage stress. The workshops should also include information on community resources. Local businesses

could be asked to provide sponsorships for light refreshments or door prizes to encourage attendance and participation.

3. Expand existing peer mentoring programs.

Middle and high school students could be utilized to expand existing peer mentoring programs that assist students with transitioning to middle school, high school, and beyond. The program should include tips on how to effectively address some of the challenges and stressors students may face at each point in their lives.

Teen Stress & Depression - 1

**Facilitators: Elizabeth Thomas
Nysha Barnes**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Katie Barone
Kyras Berthiaume
Natasha Burrell
Jael Carrethers
Steve Delgado

Mario Luja
Alondra Lupercio
Sree Manasvini Subbaraman
Keona Mudge
Hanifah Muhammad
Dayanara Rubio
Sabrena Santa Cruz
Riley Stanton
Santina Valenzuela

Marco de Niza High School
Tempe Preparatory Academy
Corona del Sol High School
Tempe High School
Connolly Middle School & All Stars Peer
Leaders
Gilliland Middle School
Tempe High School
Corona del Sol High School
Tempe High School
Ward Traditional Academy
McClintock High School
Compadre Academy
Corona del Sol High School
Kyrene Middle School

Adult Participants

Tara Stephan

Jon Evans
Brandon Romney

Maricopa County Workforce Division
Youth Program
Tempe Police Department
Corona del Sol High School

Teen Stress and Depression - 2

Discussion Summary:

Our group began by identifying some of the causes of teen stress and depression. These include academic pressures, parental pressures, juggling school with sports, clubs and other activities, transitioning from middle to high school, bullying, peer pressure, pressure to have sex, and social media pressures. The group then focused on some of the potential consequences of teen stress and depression. Losing interest in school and other activities, academic failure, school drop-out, substance use/abuse, pregnancy, suicidal ideation or act, and involvement in other harmful activities can all be the result of teen stress and/or depression.

Our group identified some key issues revolving around teen stress and depression. Youth participants in our group felt there are some programs and resources available at schools to address teen stress, but without the support and understanding of parents they don't seem to have a significant impact on students. The group was in consensus that many parents are not fully aware of, or minimize, the stressors in teens' lives. Parents need a greater understanding of how they influence their child's stress, and on how to help their child effectively deal with stress. Participants also felt that depending upon how many stressors a teen is facing the transition from middle to high school can be particularly problematic. Last, the group was in consensus that while it is difficult to juggle competing interests it is also important that teens are involved in activities that provide a sense of purpose and belonging.

Recommendations:

1. Host a community forum on teen stress.

The three school districts in partnership with the City and community organizations could offer community forums or town halls for parents and teens which would consist of a frank conversation about the many pressures teens face. Information on how to effectively manage and address teen stress and depression should be included and resources provided. This would give both parents and teens a better understanding of teen stress, its existence, and how to effectively address and manage it.

2. Expand existing peer mentoring programs.

Existing peer mentoring programs that assist teens in transition from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school could be expanded. This could include a high school "buddy system" where upper classmates mentor incoming students.

3. Increase awareness of available school activities and clubs through club open house or “club rush.”

There are a number of clubs and extra-curricular activities offered at the schools that teens can join that may give them a sense of purpose and belonging. However, many students are not aware of these opportunities or lack the confidence to join them. Sponsoring a club open house or “club rush” would give students greater opportunity to learn about the many different activities offered on campus without being intimidated.

Teen Stress & Depression - 2

**Facilitators: Isela Blanc
Maria Ornelas**

**Tempe Community Council
Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Krystal Akkurt
Dearra Anderson
Faryal Ashraf
Galen Bernick
Graham Corker
Will Dalbey
Richard Delgado
Leaders
Lupita Escobedo
Janet Freeman
Amanda Johnson
Sophie Kniaz
Aliyah Montanez
Landis Owens
Raul Polanco
Trinidad Villela

Gililand Middle School
Gililand Middle School
Corona del Sol High School
Tempe High School
Ward Traditional Academy
Compadre Academy
Connolly Middle School/ All Stars Peer

Marcos de Niza High School
Tempe High School
Corona del Sol High School
Tempe Preparatory Academy
Compadre Academy
Kyrene Middle School
McClintock High School
Tempe High School

Adult Participants

Patricia Hillman
Khalid Jenkins
Juan Mendez
Debi Schaefer

Fees College Preparatory Middle School
Kyrene Middle School
Arizona House of Representatives
Tempe Municipal Court